



National Park Service
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Jean Lafitte News Release

For Immediate Release
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Wetlands Take Center Stage in New Barataria Preserve Exhibits

The Barataria Preserve of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve has just finished an extreme makeover of its visitor center, complete with \$500,000 in new exhibits that focus on the ecology and importance of Louisiana's wetlands. The grand opening for the new exhibits is set for Saturday, March 31, at 1:00 p.m.

Exhibits include dioramas of the preserve's major habitats, displays explaining how the Mississippi River delta was formed and how humans have re-engineered it, and areas highlighting local history and the state of the delta today. Interactive exhibits will share the voices of frogs and birds, illustrate delta water movement, and ask visitors for solutions to the problems of wetlands loss.

"The visitor center was built in 1986, before computer displays and interactive exhibits," said Angela Rathle, Supervisory Park Ranger. "Although the original exhibits were wonderful, they just didn't grab many of today's visitors. We hope the new look and focus will help visitors discover the deeper meanings of the preserve."

"The park staff has been here answering visitor questions for more than 20 years now and we have a good handle on what people want to know about Louisiana's wetlands," Rathle said.

Planning for the new exhibits began several years ago with designers, exhibit builders, and National Park Service staff teaming up with subject matter experts. Park staff, volunteers, and partners worked together to decide the final look and content of the exhibits. Joni Blanchard of the Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary Program, a park partner, said, "I hope the new displays will help people better understand south Louisiana's land loss issues."

The Barataria Preserve is located 17 miles south of New Orleans at 6588 Barataria Boulevard near Crown Point. The preserve, managed by the National Park Service, contains 20,000 acres of forest, baldcypress swamp, and marsh, and is home to alligators, egrets, deer and other native delta species. An environmental education center provides school programs and summer youth camps. The visitor center, parking lots, and picnic areas are open 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. For more information, call the preserve at 504-589-2330 ext. 10 or visit www.nps.gov/jela.

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